

## **PD 23: Hampton Roads**

### **Introduction to PDC Area**

The Hampton Roads Planning District covers approximately 2,500 square miles and is home to more than 1.6 million people. This region encompasses 22 local governments: the counties of Isle of Wight, James City, Southampton and York. While both Gloucester and Surry Counties are a part of the Hampton Roads Planning District, each shares membership in other planning district commissions. Surry County is a part of the Crater Planning District and information about Surry is included in PD19 of this plan. Gloucester County is a part of the Middle Peninsula Planning District and information about Gloucester is included in PD18. The cities included in this planning district include: the cities of Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Virginia Beach, Williamsburg, Suffolk and Franklin; and the towns of Windsor, Smithfield, Boykins, Branchville, Capron, Courtland, Ivor and Newsoms.

The expanse of water and outdoor opportunities associated with the coastal landscapes of the region offer abundant outdoor recreation. Whether it is exploring history, cultural activities, playing sports, boating, canoeing, enjoying the scenic beauty of rural landscapes and protected natural areas, discovering the diverse natural areas, or becoming involved in an educational or interpretive opportunity, Hampton Roads offers a great variety of experiences for everyone. This region has a wealth of biodiversity and is home to one third of the rare, threatened and endangered plants in the commonwealth. There are also a variety of recreational opportunities throughout the region for residents and visitors.

The region relies heavily on its water resources for its economic well being. The City of Virginia Beach is one of the major destination beach areas for visitors on the east coast. In the western part of the region are rural counties that have, to date, received less pressure for development. Isle of Wight while still predominantly rural is experiencing increased growth pressure. Other urban communities in the region continue to experience development and redevelopment and are, in part, magnets for growth occurring in surrounding communities.

Because the Hampton Roads Planning District is heavily populated, urban issues with regard to parks and recreational opportunities need to be considered. Excellent conservation practices are critical in this urban environment. Planning in urban population areas should include alternative transportation modes, especially for populations without access to personal vehicles. Because open space and leisure activities are important to quality of life so is the availability of a variety of recreational experiences. Since major state and regional park systems, which offer large areas of open space and natural area experiences, are not typically located in urban settings -- greenways, urban open spaces and stream valleys can be blended into systems to meet some of the demand for natural and passive areas in urban settings.

### **Geographic characteristics**

The Hampton Roads Planning District Region lies in the mid-Atlantic Coastal Plain. Three major river drainage systems in the region include: the York, James and Chowan basins. To the east, the Atlantic Ocean and the Chesapeake Bay form an undulating natural boundary for the region. The predominant features of the region include the coastal shorelines along with vast expanses of open water, and the marshlands and swamps. Most portions of the James and York Rivers in the region are estuarine. Freshwater systems in the region include the Nottoway, Blackwater, Meherrin, North Landing and Northwest Rivers, Back Bay and the Dismal Swamp. The

waterways form diverse natural systems and provide excellent habitats, as well as opportunities for boating, picnicking, camping, swimming and other outdoor enjoyment.

### **Demographics**

The region continues to experience a rapid growth rate. In 2000, the region had a population of 1.5 million. By 2005, the population had increased to 1.6 million. In fact, all the localities in the region except Portsmouth and Hampton experienced growth in that 5-year period. Future growth is anticipated to be rapid, with the population in the region projected to increase to 1.7 million by 2020. With growth rates for Chesapeake, James City, Isle of Wight and York Counties of 22%, 38%, 21%, 30%, respectively. In addition, the City of Suffolk is anticipated to have a growth rate of 27% by 2020. Remaining counties and cities growth rates are steady, but under 20%. Hispanic populations continue to grow in the region. Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Virginia Beach and Williamsburg all have over 3% Hispanic persons comprising their populations.

### **Demand/survey findings**

Currently, the most popular activities in the region are outdoor beach use, walking, bicycling and boating. The most pressing recreational needs in this region are additional boating facilities and public access to beaches. Additional walking trails and playgrounds within walking distance of most populations are also needed. Large tracts of land are in demand for hunting and horseback riding. Both indoor and outdoor swimming facilities, golf courses, fitness trails and tennis courts are needed and could be in part provided by private sector initiatives close to neighborhoods throughout the region. Certainly with traffic congestion being an increasing concern in Hampton Roads, the demand for bicycling facilities to meet both commuter and student needs is increasing.

Based on the results of the 2006 *Virginia Outdoors Survey* and the Outdoor Recreation Facilities Inventory, the Hampton Roads region has specific needs include:

- Playgrounds and picnicking areas close to home.
- Additional basketball, volleyball and tennis courts.
- Multipurpose fields for soccer, football, baseball and softball.
- Public golf facilities.
- Large tracts of land open for horseback riding and hunting.
- Hiking and backpacking trails.
- Camping facilities, especially those associated with water access.
- Water access sites for fishing, swimming and boating.
- Facilities for nature study.

### **Outdoor Recreation**

- Better serve Latino and Spanish speaking cultural groups, it is important to: Establishing trust relationships; Hire bilingual staff; Advertise in the Spanish media; Host Latino-themed events; Create programs with the community, not for them. Invite, involve and include Hispanics in all aspects of service delivery. Similar strategies are effective for other cultural groups.
- Due to the increase in cultural and ethnic diversity in the Commonwealth, consideration should be given to making signs, literature and audio displays available in other languages.

- State and regional agencies should place a high priority on providing recreation opportunities to the Commonwealth's urban population in "close-to home" settings to allow for better access and to avoid overuse of facilities planned for rural populations.
- Local agencies in partnership with state and federal agencies should ensure that adequate supplies of recreation and open space are provided to meet demand and that those areas and facilities are adequately staffed, funded, and maintained. A dedicated funding source for the acquisition, management and maintenance of recreation areas and facilities should be considered a priority.
- Activity user groups along with local parks and recreation departments should continue to educate outdoor recreation enthusiasts to be cognizant of the impacts they have on others to minimize user conflicts and increase economic and natural resource sustainability.
- Local, state and federal government should provide the appropriate number and venue of opportunities for the Commonwealth's population to enjoy and access outdoor environments.
- State and local DCR and local parks and recreation departments should provide opportunities to learn responsible use of public lands through the teaching of *Leave No Trace* and *Tread Lightly!* Skills.
- DCR and other natural resource agencies should provide leadership and example in operations and maintenance on behalf of conservation and outdoor ethics.
- Property owners should promote management techniques that promote safe outdoor recreation environments.

## **Land Conservation**

The land conservation maps for the region includes existing conservation land in the following categories.

- State/Federal conservation lands: split by state and federal management agencies
- Local open space lands
- Conservation easements
- Designated historic districts and eligible historic districts

The acreages for each land conservation category are shown on the map. Future land conservation needs and direction should relate to the remaining resources that warrant protection for water quality, habitat, quality of life and economic viability of the area. Many organizations work together with localities and the region to provide an array of land conservation mechanisms (See Chapter III. Land Conservation).

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## **Land Trusts Operating in Hampton Roads**

Virginia Outdoors Foundation

The Nature Conservancy

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

The Elizabeth River Project

Hampton Land Conservancy

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Williamsburg Land Conservancy  
Newport News Green Foundation, Inc  
APVA Preservation Virginia  
Land Trust of Virginia  
The 500-Year Forest Foundation

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**General recommendation for land conservation include:**

- All localities should continue to promote the conservation and preservation of open space through land acquisition, conservation easements, stewardship agreements, the development of agricultural and forestal districts, the outright purchase of land or any of the many open space protection strategies presented in chapter III. Land Conservation.
- As population growth accelerates development pressure, land conservation and sound land use decision-making must become prominent considerations in all land-planning efforts. Localities, state agencies, and private organizations must make deliberate decisions about how to focus and prioritize their land conservation efforts. To do so, they must develop a method of targeting conservation efforts, using green infrastructure land planning techniques, geographic information systems, local comprehensive plans, and decision support systems such as the Virginia Conservation Lands Needs Assessment.
- Meeting conservation goals will require partnerships among all agencies.

**Green Infrastructure**

Regional recommendations for implementation of green infrastructure planning presented in Chapter IV include:

- Sources of funding for local government green infrastructure initiatives should be identified and sought.
- Support implementation of regional green infrastructure planning being coordinated by the Hampton Roads Planning District for regional conservation corridor system to include open space, conservation land, recreation opportunities and wildlife corridors.

**Programs**

The programs listed in this subsection outline recommendations related to statewide initiatives for outdoor recreation and conservation. The program areas include: Trails and Greenways, Blueways and Water Access, Historic and Landscape Resources, Scenic Resources, Scenic Highways/Virginia Byways, Scenic Rivers, Watersheds and Environmental and Land Stewardship Education.

**Trails & Greenways**

Trail and greenway planning initiated at the local and regional level is important for the future development of an infrastructure that promotes public health. Only a handful of local governments have a formally adopted trails plan. With only a small percentage of existing plans approved and integrated into the locality's comprehensive plan, there is a risk that development will continue to occur without consideration for people who want to integrate exercise into their

daily routine by walking, jogging or cycling to points of interest. Each locality should develop a trail and greenway plan, bicycle and pedestrian plan, and/or green infrastructure plan incorporating trails that will be adopted as a formal component of the comprehensive plan. In the plan, an effort should be made to link existing and proposed public lands and other resources valued by the community with businesses and neighborhoods.

- Local governments should have a greenways and trails component in their comprehensive plan that provides for a variety of leisure trail experiences and promotes pedestrian and bicycle transportation alternatives.
- State, regional and local governments should include funds for trail development, management and maintenance in annual capital and operating budgets, and seek creative ways to provide incentive funding for trail development.
- State, regional and local governments should strengthen the public's understanding of the connection between trails and public health and establish policies that support pedestrian and bicycle facilities in road construction and development/redevelopment projects.
- DCR should partner with Planning District Commissions to a) facilitate communications between trail providers, users, and policy makers, b) encourage the private sector to improve regional and statewide trail opportunities and support and c) focus on regional trail networks to establish a trunkline statewide trail system.
- Local and regional trail managers should provide information about their trail at trailheads, in brochures and on Web sites so that users can choose sections within their skill and capability levels.

Trunkline trails are statewide corridors connecting urban, suburban and rural areas of Virginia. Plans to establish routes and connect with other local and regional trails are important to the success of these major trails. Local, regional and state planners should work together to mediate issues that arise when trails cross-jurisdictional boundaries, to provide bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure (including signage and amenities) and to get information out to the public. Trunkline trails existing or underway in the region include:

1. The **James River Heritage Trail** is proposed to follow America's Founding River from the Chesapeake Bay to the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. The trail follows the old Kanawha Canal towpath, park trails, scenic riverside roadways and urban riverfront trails deep into the heart of Virginia. In Hampton Roads the corridor for this trunkline trail could go through
2. The **Trans Virginia Southern Trail** will stretch from the Cumberland Plateau to the Chesapeake Bay. Comprised of many trails existing or underway, this network will connect the mountains to the sea and stimulate ecotourism across Southern Virginia. In Hampton Roads the corridor could go through the City of Virginia Beach, Chesapeake County, City of Suffolk, Isle of Wight County and Southampton County.
3. The **East Coast Greenway**, proposed to span almost 3000 miles from Maine to Florida, aims to connect all the major cities of the East Coast along a continuous, off-road

path. This trail will make use of waterfront esplanades, canal paths, railroad corridors and park paths for cyclists, hikers, skaters, equestrians and people with disabilities as it connects urban, suburban and rural America. An East Coast Greenway spur is planned eastward to the coastal area of Virginia and into North Carolina. A portion of this spur will be co-aligned with the Virginia Capital Trail along Route 5 with the trail crossing the James River near the mouth of the Bay. The East Coast Greenway spur corridor could be located in Isle of Wight County, the Cities of Suffolk, Norfolk and/or Chesapeake. Along this Historic Coastal Route near the North Carolina border, where the Greenway will use the Dismal Swamp Canal Trail, a 20-mile long trail that parallels the Dismal Swamp Canal and US 17. This portion of the East Coast Greenway spur will span between the City of Portsmouth and Elizabeth City, North Carolina. As plans for the corridor proceed, localities and regional representatives should be involved in the decision making process. In recent months, significant progress has been made

**4. The Virginia Capital Trail** along Route 5, which has been approved by all of the local jurisdictions, should be constructed in a manner that preserves the historic and scenic beauty of its unique tree corridor and should be made available for public use by the Jamestown commemoration in 2007. Support from the region's localities, the state agencies and non-profit organizations are needed for continued implementation of the Virginia Capital Trail to Richmond, and opportunities for linking future greenways and trails to the Scenic Route 5 corridor.

**Other regional and local trail recommendations include:**

In the Hampton Roads region, efforts are underway to coordinate local greenways and trails planning and development. A formal program to coordinate these plans on the Upper Peninsula has been in effect for some time, and localities are discussing approaches for broader regional coordination through the Hampton Roads Planning District. Locally and regionally initiated trail and greenway planning is important for identifying and providing these desirable resources for communities. Such plans should reflect efforts to link existing and proposed trails and greenways into a regional greenways network connecting existing and proposed recreational, natural, cultural, water, business/commercial, and other resources the community deems desirable.

**The following are greenway/trail proposals for this region:**

**5. The James River Heritage Trail** would traverse Virginia along the length of the James.

**6. The Virginia Southside Trail/Virginia Beach Pipeline Trail** would extend from Virginia Beach to Mount Rogers in the western part of the commonwealth. A portion of this trail would use the right-of-way of the Lake Gaston/Virginia Beach water pipeline.

**7. The Hampton Roads Center Parkway Greenway (check map location)** is being developed along the new east/west Expressway. The greenway will connect Newport News and Hampton to the 8-mile trail system at Sandy Bottom Nature Trail. The City of Hampton could further connect this trail system to a series of inter-connected trails throughout the city, possibly utilizing old railroad and utility line right-of-ways. An abandoned section of railroad is being targeted for connection of Old Town Phoebus with an area along I-64, adjacent to downtown Hampton.

**8. Newmarket Creek**, (check map location) which runs 12 miles through the City of Hampton, is being developed as a blueway/greenway park. The first canoe launch has been installed at Air

Power Park on Mercury Boulevard. This location will connect the greenway park to the Bass Pro Shop Lake on Power Plant Parkway, which is approximately 5-miles. The master plan for the combined greenway/blueway is currently being developed. The greenway will include a seven-acre site with interpretive center and launch area. Other launches with amenities are being planned. As a part of the contract with the consulting firm, a blueway/greenway guide is being developed for Hampton. Newmarket Creek connects with Back River and Eventually, the Chesapeake Bay. Newmarket Creek will become the core of an extensive blueway system for the city.

9. The cities of Suffolk, Portsmouth, Chesapeake and Norfolk have teamed up to develop this regions first inter-city trail connection in the southside Hampton Roads area. The **Multi-City Bike Trail** totals 28 miles in length and will promote regionalism by improving links with several southside Hampton Road cities.

10. The **Colonial Parkway** is recognized as an excellent facility for multiuse recreational trail access. Pavement improvements for bicyclists and signage as a multiuse trails for pedestrians and bicyclists would improve safety.

**Trails of regional significance listed in the James City County Greenway Master Plan include:**

11. The **Peninsula Greenway** proposed in James City County along the existing utility easement shared with Virginia Dominion Power, Colonial Gas and Newport News Water Works. This trail traverses the length of the county and serves as the structural spine for greenway development. This trail should be integrated with the East Coast Greenways as well as into the Regional Bikeway Plan as a multiuse greenway corridor.

12. The **Cross County Greenways** is a primary greenway corridor in James City County connecting Jamestown Island with York River State Park. This corridor links the Powhatan Creek Greenway with the York River Greenway at the James City County District Park Sports Complex.

13. The **Powhatan Creek Greenway** is a natural corridor located in James City County's sensitive environmental area along Powhatan Creek and collocated with the Chesapeake Bay Resource Protection Area (RPA).

14. The **Williamsburg Inner and Outer Loops** are trails within James City County that parallel existing roadways including the Route 199 inner loop corridor and the outer loop on Centerville Road in Lightfoot south to Route 5 along Greensprings Road.

Other secondary spur trails mentioned in the in the James City County Master Plan that connect to the regional greenways listed above include the following. These secondary trails are not located on the Virginia Outdoors Plan map, but should be considered local priorities in meeting the greenway network goals.

- **The Greensprings Greenway**
- **School Spurs**
- **Clara Byrd Baker Spur**
- **James Blair Spur**
- **Mid County Spur**
- **New Towne Spur**

- **Longhill Road Trail**
- **News Road Trail**
- **John Tyler Trail**
- **Monticello Trail**
- **College Creek Greenway**
- **Williamsburg Crossing Spur**

### **Blueways & Water Access**

Boating, fishing, beach access, and natural area access adjacent to the water bodies should be increased throughout the region. While this area boasts many of these facilities, demand is also high. An ever-growing influx of tourists is interested in enjoying the water-related recreational areas. Emphasizing access from the water may increase the availability of some natural area systems for passive recreation. *The Chesapeake Bay Area Public Access Plan* could assist in determining the areas of greatest need for additional public access. The Hampton Roads Planning District Commission study, *The Waters of Southeastern Virginia*, and the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission Regional Shoreline study were prepared in close cooperation with 15 member local governments and reflect local desires for public access. Access considerations for the region include the following:

### **Beach Access Recommendations**

- Cooperative agreements among localities and other agencies, as well as private landowners, are encouraged in order to meet the increasing need for public access to beaches and other water-related recreational resources.
- In cooperation with localities, state land management agencies should identify strategies to make additional waterfront resources available for public use.
- Adequate support facilities and services, such as restrooms, concessions, parking and maintenance should be a priority for existing and proposed public water and beach access areas.
- Public agencies need to acquire and/or maintain access to existing public beaches that may be jeopardized by changes in land use or development activities.

### **Water Trail Recommendations**

- The navigable rivers of the state should be managed as water trails. Public access areas and support facilities should be developed at appropriate intervals along these rivers.
- Regional and local governments should work with state agencies to market water trails through brochures, maps, signage and the media.
- Local jurisdictions should encourage both private and public landowners to operate rest stops and boat-in-only campgrounds along water trails at suitable site locations along Virginia rivers and streams.

Water Trails identified in the region include:

**15. Elizabeth River Water Trail** to include connecting **Paradise Creek** in Portsmouth with other regional wildlife corridors and water trails and support Paradise Creek Nature Park as the vital link in these corridors and trails.

### **16. Chickahominy Water Trail**



### **Water Access Recommendations**

- Old ferry crossings/landing site sand bridges should be considered for opportunities for water access.
- Provide an additional 49 water access points in the Chesapeake Bay watershed in Virginia to meet the commitments of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement.
- Water Identify and increase water access opportunities to Virginia's southern rivers.

### **Specific water access sites identified in the region for improvement or acquisition include:**

**17. Jamestown Campground and Yacht Basin** is being purchased with support of Virginia Land Conservation Foundation funding. The property is 112-acre waterfront surrounding the historic and cultural resources at Historic Jamestowne on Jamestown Island and the Jamestown Settlement. Integration of this property into all the surrounding recreational, tourist and cultural resources is important.

**18. West Neck Creek, Pocaty River, Blackwater Creek** (in the City of Virginia Beach), **Muddy Creek**, and **Asheville Bridge Creek** should all be limited to access by non-motorized boats. These water bodies are adjacent to sensitive lowlands that have high water tables and erodible shorelines. Increased erosion along these waterways will negatively affect the scenic beauty of these resources and degrade the existing water quality of the streams. The North Landing River Memorandum of Agreement identifies areas for all types of water-based recreation.

**19. Jones Creek Boat Landing** was developed on property that was a part of the Nike Missile Site. It is located on Jones Creek, which flows to the Pagan River and into the James River. Jones Creek Boat Landing includes 2 boat ramps, parking area and a public restroom and fishing pier, which will be completed this year. People from Isle of Wight County utilize this water access as well as surrounding cities; vehicles from as far away as North Carolina have been observed there also.

### **Historic and Landscape Resources**

- Each locality in the region should make every effort to identify historic and archaeological resources within each jurisdiction that can be used for economic, tourism, recreational and educational benefits, and should include those resources in all local land use planning and decision-making processes to promote preservation and protection of these resources.
- Local historic attractions, historical societies, museums and other tourism organizations in the region should build partnerships with the Virginia Association of Museums, Virginia Civil War Trails, the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities/Preservation Virginia, the Virginia Main Street Program and others to enhance local heritage tourism, educational and recreational offerings.
- Local governments and private organizations owning historic properties in the region should be encouraged to manage those properties effectively for long-term protection of

the public trust and to maximize public benefit consistent with the nature of the historic property.

**20.** Bills in the House and Senate were introduced in Spring of 2006 to designate **The Captain John Smith Water Trail** as the nation's first national historic *water* trail. Pending designation, this trail will open in 2007, when Jamestown celebrates its 400th anniversary. County commissioners, mayors, businesses, tourism agencies, and non-profit organizations should continue to promote the Captain John Smith Adventure on the James Water Trail as a component of the National historic water trail. Localities should incorporate the National Park Service's Captain John Smith National Historic Trail in local comprehensive plans as a way to further heritage and ecotourism in the region.

**21.** A bill to amend the National Trails System Act to designate the **Washington-Rochambeau Route as a National Historic Trail**" was introduced in both houses of Congress in July 2006 and is currently in committee. This 600-mile route was followed by the American and French armies in 1781 and 1782 under Generals George Washington and the comte de Rochambeau as they traveled to and returned from the siege and victory at Yorktown. This route, which passes through Hampton Roads, has also been designated as a special highway by the state. Modern day journey on Rochambeau Route from Virginia Acts of Assembly, 1980, Chapter 121, page 146 - 147, House Resolution 93, An Act to designate certain portions of the State Highway System as the Washington-Rochambeau Highway, and to provide for marking of such highway. <http://xenophongroup.com/mcjoynt/virw3r4.htm>.

### **Scenic Resources Recommendations**

- Each locality should conduct a visual resources assessment as part of their green infrastructure inventory and mapping process. Consider using universities and other institutions to help supplement and support this effort.
- Localities should ensure that a component of their comprehensive plan provides for the protection and enhancement of scenic resources, visual character and viewsheds.
- Localities should develop corridor management plans for scenic byways, blueways, and greenways to assure preservation of the scenic quality of the corridor.

Scenic corridors contributing to tourism and the overall aesthetic character of the Commonwealth for business, industry and residents in Hampton Roads that should receive consideration by local and regional plans for viewshed management include:

**Route 5 and the Virginia Capital Trail Corridor**

**Captain John Smith Adventures on the James Driving Trail**

### **Scenic Highways/Virginia Byways**

Scenic roads provide leisure time experiences and connect travelers to various scenic, historic, cultural and recreational sites. Since driving for pleasure and visiting historic sites are in the top three recreational activities, these resources become a critical link for communities. The preservation of their inherent qualities is critical to of attractive and welcoming communities. Designation of these roads, through the Virginia Byway Program, provides opportunities for promotion and protection. Many collaborative efforts have used scenic roads to tell a significant story of our history and natural resources. These thematic trails are further discussed in the Scenic Byways subsection of Chapter VII. Following are general and specific recommendations for scenic roads:

- For the first time in Virginia history, three roads were designated as **All American Roads**: Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP), George Washington Parkway (GW), and **Colonial Parkway**. The **Colonial National Historical Park** is recognized and an All-American Road. The Colonial Parkway is journey through 167 years of the English colonial experience in America beginning at Jamestown. The Parkway leads first to Williamsburg and culminates at Yorktown. Along the entire route spectacular views of the James and York Rivers abound with turnouts that glimpses of the area's rich natural and cultural history.
- On September 22, 2005, for the first time ever four new national byway designations were given to Virginia roads. Protection of the scenic viewsheds and natural, historical and cultural resources for the Colonial National Historical Park is critical to the continue beauty and uniqueness of these corridors and their environs.
- Local governments should partner with other state, local and professional organizations to determine implementation strategies to protect the scenic assets of byway corridors.
- The DGIF should continue to work with regional and local governments and other organizations to encourage additional marketing and enhancements to **Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail** sites. Ecotourism is an important component in promoting natural resource conservation.

**22.** The concept of a scenic state connector road and greenbelt between **Green Spring** and the **Colonial Parkway** should be explored.

**Local jurisdictions should recognize and nominate scenic roads for designation as Virginia Byways. Specific roads recommended for evaluation to determine eligibility for the Virginia Byways Program include:**

- 23.** The **Green Sea Byway**, which will connect the Back Bay Wildlife Refuge to the Great Dismal Swamp by using secondary roads in the cities of Virginia Beach and Chesapeake.
- 24.** State Route 35 in Southampton County
- 25.** U13 to the Eastern Shore
- 26.** US Route 17 in Isle of Wight County

### **Scenic Rivers**

An ever-increasing awareness of Virginia's Scenic Rivers is a direct result of concerns for water quality, bio-diversity, scenic landscapes, and water quantity. River resources are a critical component for natural resource planning. In Hampton Roads there are currently 3 designated scenic river segments. In order to more successfully protect river resources the following general and specific recommendations are given.

- Local government should nominate candidate streams and rivers for study and possible Scenic River designation.
- DCR should assist local governments with development of planning tools (e.g., land-use overlays, corridor management plans) that will afford special recognition and protection to Virginia's Scenic Rivers.

**The following rivers in this region are designated Virginia Scenic Rivers:**

**North Landing River and Tributaries** from the North Carolina state line to its headwaters, including segments of Pocaty Creek, Blackwater Creek, and West Neck Creek (+/- 26 miles). This river system flows adjacent to the North Landing River Natural Area Preserve, which

encompasses approximately 1,900 acres. The Nature Conservancy owns an additional 6,000 acres within the river system.

**Nottoway River** from the bridge at Route 40 at Stony Creek to Route 653 (Carey's Bridge) in Southampton County (+/- 33 miles).

**Lower James River** from 1.2 miles east of Trees Point to Lawnes Creek (James City /Surry County).

**The following river segment has been evaluated and qualifies as a Virginia Scenic River:**

**27. The Nottoway River** from Carey's Bridge at Route 643 to the North Carolina state line.

**The following river segments should be evaluated to determine their suitability as Virginia Scenic Rivers:**

**28. The Blackwater River** in Isle of Wight and Southampton counties from the City of Franklin to the Surry County line.

**29. The Chickahominy River** in James City County from Providence Forge to the James River. The segment between James City and the New Kent County line to its confluence with the James has been evaluated and found to qualify for designation.

**30. The Northwest River** in Chesapeake, from its headwaters to the North Carolina state line. This river could be added to the present designation for the North Landing River and its tributaries.

**31. The James River** from the Charles City/James City County line to Hampton Roads. Part of this reach has been designated by the General Assembly as a Historic River.

**32. Alton's Creek and Milldam Creek**, both tributaries to the North Landing River in Virginia Beach.

### **Watershed Resources**

Hampton Roads is in the James River and Chowan River Basin watersheds. A portion of the area is in the Chesapeake Bayside watershed with water flowing directly into the Bay.

(List of local watershed groups will be included in a later draft)

### **General watershed recommendation**

- Regional and local governments should protect the management of watersheds by integrating watershed management planning with local land use ordinances and comprehensive plans through DCR's Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act land use management initiative.

### **Environmental and Land Stewardship Education Recommendations**

Outdoor Environmental Education needs are being assessed for each region. The information about potential outdoor education facility needs will be identified in a later draft.

Federal, state, regional and local agencies will provide citizens access to stewardship education and conservation resources.

Federal, state, regional and local agencies will promote the value and benefits of outdoor experiences and their relationship to environmentally literate citizenry.

Continue to explore opportunities for partnership between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and others to provide compatible recreational and environmental education for Virginia's citizens.

### **Federal Facilities**

**33. Fort Monroe** is located adjacent in the City of Hampton at the confluence of the James River at Hampton Roads Chesapeake Bay. In the past, public access was restricted due to the property's military mission. Fort Monroe is included in the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) list. Strong consideration for the property's cultural and scenic qualities and opportunities for regional and statewide recreational benefits should be prioritized in redevelopment and conservation plans for the property. Public access to the water should be a high priority.

**34.** The possibility of using the **Fort Story** beach for providing additional public access may be a future consideration. Other U. S. military installations in the region should also be evaluated for their potential to be used for joint recreational activities, particularly beach and water access.

### **National Parks**

#### **General recommendations for National Parks include:**

- Continue to develop multi-modal connections to NPS sites, as a component of an interconnected, statewide system of trails and greenways. Support efforts underway at parks such as Petersburg, Appomattox, and Richmond that are currently engaged in efforts to link battlefields, historic sites, parks, and communities.
- Work with state agencies to elevate battlefield protection in various land conservation, scenic viewshed, and heritage preservation initiatives. Utilizes partnerships to identify, prioritize, and develop strategies to protect critical resources.
- Continue collaborative efforts through the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Water Trails Program and Potomac Heritage National Scenic to connect people to heritage, outdoor recreation, and educational opportunities and resources.

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#### **Chesapeake Bay Gateways**

The National Park Service coordinates the Chesapeake Bay Gateway Program (link: <http://www.baygateways.net>) to promote a historic and environmental focus on water access. Designated Chesapeake Bay Gateway in the Hampton Roads Planning District include:

The Waterman's Museum

Yorktown Visitor Center and Battlefield

York River State Park

Chickahominy Riverfront Park

Powhatan Creek Blueway

Jamestown Island

Mariner's Museum

Virginia Living Museum

Norfolk Waterway Trail System

Hoffler Creek Wildlife Preserve  
Elizabeth River Trail – Atlantic Coastal Spur  
Nauticus National Maritime Center  
Eastern Branch Elizabeth River  
Chesapeake Bay Center a First Landing  
Great Bridge Lock Park  
Lower James River Water Trail  
Powhatan Creek Blueway  
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### **Specific recommendations for National Parks include:**

**35. The Colonial National Historical Park's** is currently working with the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities and the Commonwealth on plans for the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jamestown's settlement. The National Park Service (NPS) supports the establishment of bikeways, and walking and jogging trails in the **Colonial National Historical Park and Jamestown Island** along the **Colonial Parkway** corridor, now designated an All American Road and National Scenic Byway. The NPS plans to explore the feasibility of building a trail for walkers, joggers and bicyclists as part of the Yorktown Battlefield. The feasibility of building a trail linking the west tour road to Surrender Field to prevent conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians or cyclists will be studied. Due to increased development in the area, the NPS is interested in working to protect the vistas adjacent to and throughout the park. The NPS also plans to study the effects of heavy visitation on several sites along the Colonial Parkway. It will assess opportunities to improve facilities, e.g., hardening trails and adding comfort stations and overflow parking. The NPS recommends the **Cheatham Pond** tract be divided into parcels with long-term leases or management agreements with both the U. S. Navy and York County. A portion of the parcel tentatively proposed for development and management by York County has excellent potential for a public boating access site, along with passive recreational facilities such as hiking/biking/horseback riding trails and picnic areas.

### **National Wildlife Refuges & Fish Hatcheries**

The USFWS will coordinate and implement the following recommendations with regard to outdoor recreation and the NWRs.

**36. Continue maintenance of the agreement allowing access through Back Bay NWR to False Cape State Park** that accommodates the wildlife resources of the refuge and park visitors. In 1989, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USF&WS) received approval to expand the **Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge** to the north and west of Sandbridge and along the western shore of Back Bay. When complete, the 6,340-acre expansion will provide additional protection for the marshes and fastlands surrounding Back Bay and help to initiate the recovery of this important resource. The westward expansion of Back Bay NWR should include provisions for canoeing/kayaking and bank fishing. This may be accomplished by renovating former boat ramps and through partnerships with the Commonwealth and the City of Virginia Beach. Give high priority to the relocation of the visitor center to the western side of Back Bay to improve accessibility to the refuge for environmental education.

**37. The Great Dismal Swamp Wildlife Refuge** consists of about 109,000 acres in Virginia and North Carolina and is managed by USF&WS. Approximately 84,000 acres are located in the cities of Suffolk and Chesapeake. Measures to protect the refuge and provide appropriate access to the area immediately surrounding the refuge are being addressed. The Dismal Swamp Canal

Trail opened in April 2006. A comprehensive conservation plan for the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge is being completed. In the 2000 Appropriation Act, the Virginia General Assembly directed that, "The Virginia Tourism Corporation, with the assistance of the **City of Suffolk**, shall develop a Public Use Development Plan and Environmental Assessment for the Great Dismal Swamp Wildlife Refuge." The report, *Opportunities for Regional Tourism Development*, has been prepared and the recommendations are in the process of being implemented.

**38. Plum Tree Island National Wildlife Refuge** in Poquoson is an extensive marsh system of more than 3,275 acres. The island was an old Air Force bombing range, which, because of potential hazards, is not available for public use. However, an expansion has been approved. By acquiring marsh systems to the west of Plum Tree Island, it will be possible to provide additional protection for critical habitat, and to provide opportunities for controlled public hunting and wildlife observation. Continue to explore opportunities for partnership between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and others to provide compatible recreational and environmental education for Virginia's citizens. The proposed expansion of **Plum Tree Island** should be evaluated to possibly include public access to Back River and Lloyd Bay for fishing and wildlife observation.

**Nansemond National Wildlife Refuge** is located on the Nansemond River in Suffolk, Virginia. It is a satellite refuge managed by Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. Nansemond NWR became part of the US Fish and Wildlife Service National Wildlife Refuge System in 1973 when the US Navy transferred 207 acres of salt marsh to the Service. In 1999, an additional 204 acres of upland grassland and forested stream corridors were transferred from the US Navy. It is not open to the public.

#### State Facilities

##### **State Parks**

The approval of the 2002 General Obligation Bond referendum resulted in funds that benefit the entire state park system. Funds were allocated for new state park acquisitions and for the acquisition of lands adjacent to existing parks, thus providing continued protection of dwindling open space. The bond also provided funding for numerous new facilities, improvements to existing facilities and trails, and for the development of new trails.

In accordance with Code Section 10.1-200.1 - State park master planning, master plans must be developed for new state parks prior to the implementation of any new development. Existing master plans are to be re-evaluated every five years. The master planning process requires public involvement. An advisory committee, comprised of local officials, representatives from various user groups, businesses, tourism, adjacent landowners, and others who are stakeholders in the site, convenes to participate throughout the master planning process. Public meetings are held to gain public input in addition to the presentation to the Board of Conservation and Recreation, also open to the public. Any significant change to a state park master plan or park additions in excess of \$500,000 requires public input.

State parks are listed on the Wildlife and Birding Trail. Numerous park sites participate in regional and local initiatives such as trail development and programming.

**39. False Cape State Park** (4,321 acres) located in Virginia Beach, between Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge and the North Carolina state line. The park is a mile wide barrier spit between Back Bay and the Atlantic Ocean with close to 6 miles of beach. No vehicular access is permitted. Access is by hiking, biking, or the tram, or coordinated as part of a scheduled

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education program. Parking is available at Little Island Recreation Area or the refuge. The park offers primitive camping, hiking, biking, fishing, canoeing, kayaking and boating. There is also an overnight environmental education center. In addition to environmental education, other programs include astronomy, night hikes, bird hikes, canoe trips and seining programs. Special programs are offered in conjunction with the Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, and Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge. The trails within the park allow visitors to observe beaches, dunes, maritime forests, wooded swamps, marshes and the bay all within one park visit.

In 2002, a significant portion of the park (3,573 acres) was dedicated as a state natural area preserve. Through a Memorandum of Understanding with the US Fish and Wildlife Service addressing access across the Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge, the refuge cooperatively manages the impoundments at False Cape. Through the 2002 GOB referendum, the park will be getting a new office – visitor center complex.

**40. First Landing State Park** (2,889 acres), located in Virginia Beach on the Chesapeake Bay. The park, one of the 6 original CCC state parks opened in June 1936, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The park's name was changed in 1997 from Seashore State Park to First Landing State Park to reflect its heritage as the first place where members of the Virginia Company landed. It is also listed as a National Natural Landmark for its significant natural features, rare species and communities. The park offers boating, swimming, nature and history programs, hiking, biking, picnicking, a boat launch, cabins, a full service campground with water and electric hookups, and 19 miles of trails. The Chesapeake Bay Center, which serves as the park office, visitor and environmental education center, features programs developed in cooperation with the Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center. Boardwalks connect the campground and Chesapeake Bay Center with the beach while protecting the sensitive dune areas.

Through the 2002 GOB referendum, the park has upgraded the campground with water and electric hookups, replaced campground bathhouses, constructed new storage facilities in the maintenance area, and made improvements to the Trail Center and Chesapeake Bay Center.

**41. York River State Park** (2,550 acres) is located in James City County. The park has 3.5 miles of shoreline on the York River. Included within the park is the Taskinas Creek National Estuarine Research Reserve, which is managed by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science - Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve program. The designated area of Taskinas Creek managed for research and educational purposes that supports research and monitoring in a unique watershed containing upland marle forest, fresh water habitats, estuarine habitats, and meso-haline tidal habitats. The park was once the historic 18<sup>th</sup> Century Taskinas Plantation, which qualifies the park to become a National Historic Landmark. The park also contains significant Native American archaeological sites, one of which, the Croaker Landing Site, is on the National Register of Historic Places. There are also two known 10,000-year old Paleo-Indian activity areas within the park's boundaries that are also eligible for National Register listing.

The park offers day use activities such as picnicking, fishing, nature and environmental education programming, canoeing and kayaking is available on Taskinas Creek. The Croaker Landing boat launch provides boater access to the York River. There is also a fishing pier constructed at Croaker Landing supported in part by Smurfit Stone, a local industry. The 2002 GOB provided funds toward the fishing pier and for improvements to the boat launch.



## **State Fish and Wildlife Management Areas**

**42.** Wildlife Management Areas in Hampton Roads include the **Ragged Island WMA**, **Princess Anne WMA** and **Cavalier WMA**. The DGIF should continue to investigate opportunities to acquire in-holdings in their WMA's and to improve each area with trails and other structures for wildlife viewing and other outdoor recreation. They should also acquire additional lands wherever feasible to provide additional access for public hunting, fishing and other wildlife viewing recreation.

Four tracts, totaling 1,546 acres, make up the **Princess Anne Wildlife Management Area** located on Back Bay in Hampton Roads. This serves as the Game Department's major waterfowl hunting area. Hunting opportunity is further enhanced by a long-standing cooperative agreement with Virginia State Parks. Over the years, changes in salinity and the decline in aquatic vegetation, has altered the fishery in Back Bay proper. Currently, white perch is the primary sport fish in the bay. Anglers continue to take largemouth bass and bluegill from the creeks feeding the bay. These creeks also offer excellent fishing for channel catfish during the spring spawning period. There is also a boat ramp and parking at the Princess Anne headquarters.

The **Cavalier Wildlife Management Area** is comprised of two parcels, the 750-acre Dismal Swamp tract adjoining the Dismal Swamp Canal and the 3,800-acre Cavalier tract that abuts the North Carolina state line near Route 17 in the City of Chesapeake. Cavalier WMA provides coastal and forested habitats for a wide range of wildlife, including black bear, neo-tropical migratory songbirds, canebrake rattlesnakes, white-tailed deer, and eastern wild turkeys. Currently, much of the management area is cutover forestland, with several hundred acres in 15-year-old planted pine. The 3,800-acre main tract, located approximately 2.5 miles east of the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), was once part of the Great Dismal Swamp but was ditched and drained more than 200 years ago. The 750-acre Dismal Swamp tract lies approximately 6 miles to the north and west of the main Cavalier tract. Deer and bear hunting are especially popular in this region. Deer and bear hunting is conducted through the Department's quota hunt system at this WMA.

The **Ragged Island Wildlife Management Area** consists of 1,537 acres of brackish marsh and small pine islands along the south side of the lower James River in Hampton Roads. There is the opportunity to hunt deer in the pine islands and other high ground. Mostly saltwater species are caught here on the James, including bluefish, gray trout, spot, croaker, flounder and striped bass. White perch and channel catfish can be caught in the fresh water creeks. The area has interpretive signs and trails, and has been designated a Watchable Wildlife Area. The boardwalk gives birdwatchers, hikers and photographers some unique opportunities. A public fishing pier is located at the north end of the James River Bridge. There are two parking lots, both entered from U.S. highway 17. A boardwalk, viewing platform and trail, financed through the Non-game Wildlife and Endangered Species Program, allows easy walking access for viewing the marsh.

## **Virginia Marine Resources Commission**

**General recommendations that relate to the work of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission include:**

- Continue promotion of saltwater recreational fishing opportunities in the Commonwealth through continued construction of new reef sites, and augmentation of existing artificial fishing reef sites.

## **State Forests Recommendations**

- DOF will coordinate with, and seek the assistance of, local trail and river user organizations to develop forest trails and publish maps for each state forest as well as establish greenways and blueways for public use.
- Localities should work with DOF to stress the importance of the urban canopy and help localities set goals.
- Localities should work with DOF to demonstrate the importance of a healthy urban tree canopy and develop strategies to enhance the urban forest.

## **Natural Areas**

The Hampton Roads region is in the Atlantic Flyway, enhancing opportunities to observe waterfowl throughout the region during certain periods of the year. In general, the region boasts abundant natural resources. Lands protected by federal, state, and local ownership, dedication or easements allow for biodiversity and provide opportunities for the enjoyment of nature. Properties boasting this richness could be incorporated into ecotourism initiatives, which could further promote their special character while providing a profitable tourist alternative to the region. North Carolina has a wildlife management area designated on the Northwest River adjacent to the City of Chesapeake. This landholding by North Carolina strengthens the management of the river corridor as a biologically diverse area, and it is accessible from Virginia by boat. There are also extensive state wildlife management areas on the western shore of Back Bay, including the Princess Anne Wildlife Management Area and the Whitehurst Tract. Because ecotourism is expected to be more popular in the future, it is essential that important lands within Hampton Roads be identified and conservation mechanisms established to ensure the longevity of this biodiversity. In 2006, International Paper sold company-owned forest located in the Nottoway, Blackwater and Meherrin River watersheds to the Nature Conservancy (TNC). The Virginia Department of Forestry is interested in acquiring the land for a state forest.

The following natural area preserves are located within the district: Antioch Pines and Blackwater Ecological Preserve in Isle of Wight County; Grafton Ponds in the city of Newport News; North Landing River and False Cape State Park in the city of Virginia Beach; and Northwest River in the city of Chesapeake.

DCR has, as of November 2006, documented 1116 occurrences of 295 rare species and natural communities in the Hampton Roads Planning District. Fifty-three species are globally rare and eight are federally threatened or endangered. Two hundred twenty-one conservation sites have been identified in the district; 99 (45%) have received some level of protection through ownership or management by state, federal and non-government organizations. However, only XX sites are protected well enough to ensure the long-term viability of the rare species and natural communities they support.

- DCR recommends that all unprotected conservation sites, and all unprotected portions of partially protected sites, be targeted for future land conservation efforts. The appropriate method of protection will vary with each site but may include placing the site on Virginia's Registry of Natural Areas, developing a voluntary management agreement with the landowner, securing a conservation easement through a local land trust, acquiring the site through a locality or local land trust, dedicating the site as a natural area preserve with the current owner, or acquiring the site as a state-owned natural area preserve.

Information about the location of conservation sites and the natural heritage resources they contain, as well as management assistance, is available to local planners from DCR's Natural Heritage staff. For a discussion of the Natural Heritage Program, see Chapter \_\_\_\_.

**Specific Natural Heritage Program Conservation Priorities for Hampton Roads include:**

- Continue efforts to **protect pine barren communities.**
- Continue efforts to **protect seasonal depression ponds and other significant wetlands.**
- Secure **protection of large blocks of old-growth cypress-tupelo swamps.**
- **Protect additional habitat for rare reptiles and amphibians.**

**43. Protect additional lands along the Northwest and North Landing Rivers.**

## **Transportation**

Virginia is home to more of the United States Numbered Bicycle Route system than any other state. Since both USBR 1 and USBR 76 cross the state, Virginia hosts about 41 percent of the total USBR system. USBR 1 crosses the state north-south from Arlington to the North Carolina border near Kerr Reservoir, and USBR 76 crosses east-west from Yorktown to the Kentucky border in Dickenson County. These federal routes are officially recognized by AASHTO, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. These routes are shown on VDOT's official County Maps, and signed in the field.

In addition, Virginia also hosts parts of three other long-distance bicycle routes recognized by Adventure Cycling Association, which is dedicated to establishing a national system of long-distance routes. The Trans-America Bicycle Trail crosses the country from Oregon to Virginia, and shares the same alignment as USBR 76 in Virginia. The Maine to Virginia Bicycle Route runs approximately 150 miles from Washington, D.C. to Virginia, generally along the same alignment as USBR 1, and the Virginia to Florida Bicycle Route covers 130 miles from Richmond to the North Carolina state line at Suffolk.

Local governments should also develop comprehensive bicycle plans as a component of their transportation plans. The Virginia Department of Transportation can include funds for bike trail construction projects only if the bikeway plan is included in the locality's approved transportation plan. The proposed Southeastern Parkway includes a component for alternate transportation and separate bicycle facilities in the right-of-way. The City of Virginia Beach currently has 63 miles of multi-use trails interspersed throughout the city. The Elizabeth River Trail, a \_\_\_\_-mile corridor is located in Norfolk. Adopted bike plans are currently in place for Newport News, York and James City counties as well as the cities of Williamsburg, Hampton and Virginia Beach. A regional bicycle facilities plan has been developed as part of the regions 2021 Transportation Plan. The 2030 Transportation Plan is under development and will address multimodal transportation options for the region.

Transportation is integral to conservation and outdoor recreation. General recommendations relating to transportation for the region include:

- Greater emphasis needs to be placed on providing alternatives to the use of private automobiles for daily activities. Transit systems, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, improved community design, as well as a change in people's attitudes toward transportation alternatives will be needed for the transportation system of the future to meet capacity needs and energy constraints. ([www.vtrans.org](http://www.vtrans.org))

- Priority should be given to eliminating potential transportation barriers for the public, and improving the linkages of recreation areas across major transportation corridors.
- Local governments should encourage the development of a permanent process for integrating the recommendations of local public health agencies and active living into all phases of land use planning.

**[Insert Table**

**Trails, Greenways, Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan in Hampton Roads Region**

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Local Trails/Greenways Plan</b>
City of Chesapeake	1994 Chesapeake Trails Plan
City of Franklin	
City of Hampton	
City of Newport News	Framework for the Future Bikeways Plan
City of Norfolk	2000 Living Community Bicycle Plan
City of Portsmouth	
City of Suffolk	
City of Virginia Beach	2004 Bikeways and Trails Plan for the City of Virginia Beach & 1986 Master Bikeway Plan
City of Williamsburg	1998 The Williamsburg, James City and York County Regional Bicycle Facilities Plan
Isle of Wight	2006 Proposed Improvements for Bicycles/Pedestrians
James City	2002 James City County Greenway Master Plan; 1998 Williamsburg, James City County and York County Regional Bicycle Facilities Plan & 1989 Comprehensive Sidewalk Plan
Southampton	
Surry	
York	1998 Williamsburg, James City County and York County Regional Bicycle Facilities Plan

**End Table]**

**Other State Facilities**

The following state-owned properties contain significant undeveloped land that may have potential for recreational use. Each site should be assessed, and cooperative use agreements developed where appropriate.

**The College of William and Mary**

**Old Dominion University**

**Norfolk State University**

**Christopher Newport University (incorrect location on 2002 map)**

- 44. Tidewater Community College** owns a 244-acre parcel of property located adjacent to I-664 in the City of Suffolk. Portions of this property should be examined for their potential to provide access to the James River, environmental education opportunities, and extended environmental and recreational facilities that complement the missions of Tidewater Community College and similar institutions in the region.

## **Paul D. Camp Community College**

## **Thomas Nelson Community College (map label missing)**

### **Local Parks and Recreation Departments**

All but one of the Hampton Roads counties have full-time parks and recreation departments, as do the incorporated towns, and all cities. While private organizations may provide recreation programming in the short term, they are not charged with planning for the long term recreation, park and open space needs of a community.

According to the Commonwealth of Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, Comparative Report on Local Government Revenues and Expenditures, Year Ended June 30, 2005, per capita spending on parks and recreation for each locality in this region was: City of Chesapeake \$35.56; City of Hampton \$121.59; City of Newport News 103.85; City of Norfolk \$67.01; City of Poquoson \$97.54; City of Portsmouth \$97.54; City of Suffolk \$63.16; City of Virginia Beach \$52.67; City of Williamsburg \$123.44; Isle of Wight County \$30.84; James City County \$84.87; York County \$24.30. The City of Franklin was not listed in the report. This compares to a statewide per capita spending on parks and recreation of \$55.31, including \$85.51 from Towns, \$43.75 from counties, and \$76.45 per capita spending on parks and recreation from Cities in Virginia.

- Localities should appoint a parks and recreation commission to provide citizen leadership with regard to parks and recreation issues and concerns. Commissions have been effective in many localities to enhance park areas and recreation programs. This is most important in localities where no parks and recreation department exists.
- Commitments to the maintenance, management, and development of local parks and recreational systems are necessary. Localities should explore alternative methods of funding, such as set-aside ordinances, fees and charges and public/private partnerships. The establishment of a “friends group,” which could possibly evolve into a “park foundation,” should be considered for the local parks and recreation department. This citizens group could be a source of volunteers, as well as a source for community support and other resources.
- Local parks and recreation departments should initiate a structured volunteer program that recruits, trains and retains volunteers, and recognizes their contributions to parks, programs and the overall quality of life in communities.
- All localities should develop and implement hiking and bicycling plans to connect parks, schools and neighborhoods. Encouraging biking and walking within the community can enhance community health and spirit.
- Parks and programs need to be accessible to special populations, including senior adults and persons with disabilities.
- Consideration by localities of the benefit of a school/park cooperative agreement could enhance use of school and park facilities. School systems and local parks and recreation departments should cooperate in the design of new or renovated facilities. In order to

increase local access, localities should consider cooperative management for the recreational use of private, corporate, state or federally owned lands.

- All public playgrounds, including school and park playgrounds, should meet or exceed the guidelines established by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission and published in the USCPSC Handbook for Public Playground Safety. All equipment should have a cushioned surface under and around it.
- Localities should explore turning abandoned landfills into new and needed parks. From Virginia Beach to New York City to Berkeley California, localities have found they can add parkland, while removing community eyesores.

[http://ga0.org/ct/x7LKtNM1\\_RZ8/landfill\\_to\\_parks](http://ga0.org/ct/x7LKtNM1_RZ8/landfill_to_parks)

**Specific regional park recommendations for Hampton Roads include:**

Hampton Roads Planning District has many regional parks. These parks include lands surrounding water supply reservoirs, as well as properties acquired by localities to provide local recreational opportunities or to protect biologically diverse areas. Each property owned should be evaluated and management plans adopted to ensure the appropriate balance of recreational and conservation initiatives. A regional open space plan, to include recreational and conservation opportunities, should be developed. This may involve the compilation of various existing plans available from the localities and other regional studies.

The **City of Virginia Beach** City Council adopted the *Virginia Beach Outdoors Plan 2000 Update* as a guidance document for open space and recreational planning and to integrate the plan as part of the next revision to the city's comprehensive plan. The plan encompassed five major components of the city's natural and recreational resources. These five components are: greenways, beaches and scenic waterways, cultural and natural areas, parks and athletic facilities, trails and open space preservation. Chesapeake: The Department of Parks and Recreation has developed a Master Plan "A Window Into The Year 2010 ... A Plan For Parks & Recreation". This plan was adopted by Chesapeake City Council on October 15, 1991.

**James City County** has a Parks and Recreation Master Plan

(<http://www.jccegov.com/recreation/master-plan.html>). The recommendations in the plan are estimated to cost \$150 million for land acquisition to add 68 multi-use athletic fields; 75 miles of new multi-use trails; 37 miles of greenways; 13 new boating and canoeing waterway access sites; and purchase and preserve more than 4,100 acres of undeveloped property. The preservation efforts would be in addition to the 2,650 acres that are already owned by the city for recreational use and preservation as open space.

The **City of Suffolk** completed its Open Space Master Plan in November 2000. The plan connects the cultural, historic, natural and scenic resources of the city by a non-motorized trail.

The **City of Franklin** has a parks and recreation master plan and comprehensive master plan that call for trails, picnic areas, nature programs, camping sites and access to the Blackwater River. The plans also recommend programs to incorporate greenways and conservation of open space into existing and new development.

**45.** The 763-acre **Northwest River Park** is located on the Northwest River in Chesapeake. It is an incredible natural area with opportunities and programs for environmental education, fishing, birding, camping, picnicking, canoeing, boating and hiking.

**46. Newport News Park** is an 8,065-acre site straddling the City of Newport News/York County line. This municipal park, one of the largest in the United States, provides a vast array of outdoor recreational opportunities including camping, fishing, hiking, picnicking, golfing and boating. This site also contains significant Civil War era earthworks, as well as the majority of the Grafton Ephemeral Ponds Natural Complex, which provides a wealth of potential interpretive opportunities. Ample undeveloped acreage remains on the site, which could be used for additional recreational facilities such as hiking and birdwatching. This park could offer opportunities to connect other parks and natural areas by trails and/or greenways.

**47. Grandview Nature Preserve**, in the City of Hampton, is a critical marsh and beach habitat located on the Chesapeake Bay and is currently being recommended for natural area dedication. Combined with adjoining Grundland Creek Park, there are approximately 600 acres. The beach is home to the northeastern beach tiger beetle, which is a federally threatened species and proposed for state listing as endangered. The least tern, a species of concern, has the largest nesting colony on the east coast at this site. The colony is also one of the oldest documented in the country. Because of its sensitive nature only passive recreational activities, such as hiking and bird watching, are available.

**48.** Suffolk's **Lone Star Lakes** provide more than 1,100 acres of land and freshwater with potential for additional developments. This lake system is connected to salt water via Chuckatuck Creek.

**49. Waller Mill Park** in York County is owned and operated by the City of Williamsburg. A major fresh water-oriented park near Williamsburg, it connects to a network of local bike trails.

**50. Little Creek Reservoir** is a Newport News water supply in western James City County. This reservoir contains 1,800 acres, and offers opportunities for recreation on and adjacent to its waters.

**51. New Quarter Park** in York County is a 550-acre site on Queen Creek. The park is used for group activities and includes active recreational facilities, picnic facilities, and canoe access to Queen Creek. This site should be incorporated into plans for a regional greenway system.

**52. Lake Prince, Lake Cahoon, Lake Mead, Lake Kilby, Lake Burnt Mills, Spaetes Run Lake and Western Branch Reservoir** are all water supply reservoirs within Suffolk that belong to adjacent cities. These lakes are located on impounded tributaries of the Nansemond River. They now offer only limited use for fresh water fishing. Lake Prince and the Western Branch Reservoir connect to the Nansemond River. Although little upland is owned by the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth, it is possible that additional compatible recreational resources, such as hiking trails, picnicking and environmental education, could be developed through cooperative agreements.

**53.** Connect Paradise Creek in Portsmouth with other regional wildlife corridors and water trails and support **Paradise Creek Nature Park** as the vital link in these corridors and trails. Paradise Creek Nature Park will be a 40-acre park maintained by the City of Portsmouth. The

Elizabeth River Project and the Virginia Port Authority are partnering to acquire the land, design the park, and construct it prior to turning it over to the City. The park will feature ten acres of restored wetlands, boardwalks that go up into the tree canopy, a canoe/kayak launch, walking trails, a tidal garden, a pedestrian bridge, educational spaces, and a terraced “earth works” sculpture that will give a view of the creek and the nearby Elizabeth River from 50 feet in the air. The park is the cornerstone project of the efforts to restore the 1.5 mile-long Paradise Creek, and it will provide the first public access along the creek. A water trail is being planned, and there will be a wildlife corridor with almost 100 acres of habitat conserved in the 2.9-square-mile watershed. More information is available at <http://www.elizabethriver.org/FrontPgStories/Park.htm>.

**54. Sandy Bottom Nature Park**, in the City of Hampton, is a 456-acre environmental education facility situated in an area dominated by pine hardwood mixed forest and non-tidal wetlands. The park is home to the state endangered canebrake rattlesnake and Mabee’s salamander. A 52-acre borrow mining pit site has been converted to wetlands, complete with a perimeter trail, boardwalk, observation tower and canoe trails. There is a 10,000 sq. ft. nature center and a wildlife exhibit area. The park provides year-round interpretive programming for school groups and the general public. Recreational activities include hiking, biking, camping, picnicking, canoeing and fishing. Conference and classroom facilities are available.

**55. The Harris Creek Area** of Hampton borders on the Back River, which feeds into the Chesapeake Bay. A parcel of property on the tip of the Harris Creek peninsula is being considered for acquisition as an open space/natural area. The owner has offered to sell the 155 acres to the City of Hampton for preservation, as development is closing in on the property. The property features forested wetlands, marsh and forested uplands. Wetland restoration may be a part of the future of this site. Public access will be limited to passive recreational activities.

**56. Carrollton Nike Park** (check map location) is a 156-acre park in the northern end of Isle of Wight County. Currently, 42 open acres and 7 wooded acres are used have been developed for park buildings, recreation courts and fields, playgrounds, picnic areas, skateboard park and multiuse trails. The remainder of the park is cultivated or remains natural woodlands and marsh along Jones Creek offering wildlife viewing and birding.

**57.** The City of Virginia Beach acquired **Stumpy Lake** a 1,400- acre parcel that serves as a water supply, has surrounding wetlands and wooded areas in addition to a golf course.

### **Hostels**

The Hampton Roads Region should be considered as a location for a **gateway hostel** convenient to mass transit and amenities of the urban core.

### **Private sector**

All private sector recommendations for meeting the outdoor recreation and conservation needs in the region need to be consistent with local land use plans and environmental constraints. The private sector could enhance outdoor recreational opportunities by providing tennis courts, swimming pools and golf courses. Often these types of amenities are provided in new housing developments. The Hampton Roads Planning District has an abundance of water and outdoor recreational opportunities already provided by the private sector. Facilities such as dry storage



areas for boats and fishing piers support the public water access existing in the region. Private sector opportunities also exist for rental of water-sports equipment and in development of private water-to-land access points along water trail corridors. Sites that provide boaters and other visitors with eating facilities and overnight accommodations are needed throughout the region.

The private sector plays a significant role in providing recreational opportunities in the commonwealth. Familiarity with the *Landowner Liability Law, Code of Virginia, Chapter 29.1-509* could encourage some landowners to enter into an agreement with a unit of government to provide public access while minimizing their liability. As many localities prepare for substantial increases in residential growth, consideration must be given for the inclusion of mechanisms within the permitting process to encourage or require the preservation of open space and the development of recreational amenities to meet communities' needs.

The following general recommendations are made to improve private sector provisions of outdoor recreation.

- Encourage public outdoor recreation providers to partner with multiple private sector organizations.
- Recreational use agreements and/or easements should be encouraged for private property owners providing public recreation opportunities and to make more private lands available for recreation.
- Efforts should be made by DCR and local parks and recreation departments to make existing and potential private sector providers of outdoor recreation, especially where applicable to trails and greenways development, knowledgeable about the Virginia Landowner Liability Law.
- Local, state and federal outdoor recreation providers should support corporate recognition programs and improve corporate recognition for small business willing to incorporate outdoor recreation needs in an environmentally friendly manner.